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VICTORY'S VICTIMS?

THE NEGRO'S
FUTURE



BASED ON A RADIO DISCUSSION
BY *A. PHILIP RANDOLPH*
AND *NORMAN THOMAS*

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VICTORY'S VICTIMS?

— THE NEGRO'S FUTURE

By NORMAN THOMAS and A. PHILIP RANDOLPH

(This discussion was recorded on May 26, 1943 and delivered over a nation-wide network of radio stations the week of June 13, 1943).

Norman Thomas: If I were asked to name the single most alarming factor in the American domestic scene, I should say it was the growth of racial tension, especially between whites and colored Americans. Except perhaps at the height of the Klu Klux Klan mania, I have never known it worse. The reason is not that the objective situation is worse. Indeed we have made some improvements before the war and even during the war in reducing various hurtful discriminations, but progress even in getting rid of the shame of lynching has been too slow to keep up with the rise in resentment. This war which to thousands of Negroes seems a white man's war, a struggle of white people for power and not for human liberation, emphasizes the strain in race relations.

Too many of us white Americans who are right in denouncing the monstrous Nazi doctrine of the master race, then turn around and practice this same doctrine toward our colored neighbors. It is a doctrine with no more scientific support in America than in Germany.

I have just been reading Rackham Holt's life of one of the outstanding scientists and human beings of our time, George Washington Carver. This Negro boy, born in slavery, torn with his mother from his home by white

kidnappers, recovered by a kind master without his mother, whom none of her friends ever saw again, grew to be one of the greatest contributors of his time to the material and spiritual wealth of the world. It is to be hoped that Congress will soon make his birthplace a national park. Dr. Carver's life and achievements are a glory to our country and a proof of the capacity of his race.

Today I am happy to share this period with another brilliant representative of our common country and his race. My guest A. Philip Randolph is not only an eloquent speaker, a leader of his people, but an outstanding figure in the whole American labor movement. I know that he is an uncompromising foe of Nazism and fascism everywhere. That gives peculiar weight to his words. He has consented to let me ask him some very direct questions on the race situation in America and its bearing on war and peace.

Mr. Randolph, is it true that racial resentment and bitterness are rising in America?

A. Philip Randolph: — Yes, Mr. Thomas, it is well-nigh a matter of common knowledge that racial resentment and bitterness are rising in America and what is more disturbing, they are rising with amazing rapidity.

Thomas: — Would you give a brief review of the concrete acts of discrimination in the armed services, in war industry, in education and so forth which give rise to this resentment?

Randolph: — I will be very glad to do so, Mr. Thomas. The story of Jim-Crow in uniform has been aptly styled by Dwight MacDonald, a noted writer, as the "war's greatest scandal." Negroes occupy the rather strange position

of being required to fight for the right to fight and die for their own country. The armed forces are reeking with race discrimination. Negro and white soldiers are segregated in the army, Negro and white women are segregated in the WAACS, and although Dorrie Miller, Negro messman, displayed remarkable heroism in the naval battle at Pearl Harbor, Negroes are not yet permitted to become commissioned officers in the Navy. Negro doctors can only treat Negro soldiers; in the air corps, Negroes are segregated in the Jim-Crow school at Tuskegee, Alabama, and up to today, there is not a single Negro air pilot in combat service anywhere.

In the South, Negro soldiers have been denied the right to eat in the diners on railroads while traveling to their camps. At various southern camps, Negro soldiers are being called "niggers" by white officers and shamelessly abused and nothing is done about it. The WAVES and SPARS reject Negro women and the Red Cross Jim-Crows Negro blood although science states there is no difference in the blood plasma based upon race.

Let me cite several instances of the way Negroes are treated in Uncle Sam's uniform in the South.

At Fort Benning, Georgia, May 2, 1941: The body of a Negro private, Felix Hall, was found hanging from a tree, arms and legs bound. Negro groups charge Private Hall was lynched. The BULLETIN of the NAACP states that at Fort Benning "concentration camp tactics are allegedly being used against Negro soldiers, and torture and killings take place at the pleasure of the military police."

Fayetteville, North Carolina, August 6, 1941: Sergeant E. L. Hargraves, white military policeman, and Private

Ned Turman, Negro engineer, are killed and four other soldiers are wounded in a gun battle between white and Negro soldiers on a crowded bus. Cause: brutality by white M. P.'s.

Judge William H. Hastie, former Civilian Aide to War Secretary Mr. Henry L. Stimson, resigned because he found himself helpless in attempting to stop the spread of Jim-Crowism and secure just treatment for Negroes in the armed forces.

These things have happened in an army supposed to be fighting for democracy. They could be multiplied a hundred fold. It is mere accident that this undeclared war against a part of our armed forces has not broken out into devastating riots, blood-shed and lynching on a large scale.

I think it important, too, to state, Mr. Thomas, that in spite of the insult and humiliation visited upon Negroes in the army, navy, air corps, U. S. Marines and WAACS, 16.1 per cent of all volunteers in the armed forces in 1941-42 were Negroes, although only 9.8 per cent of the population are colored according to the Office of War Information.

Meanwhile lynchings continue, discrimination against Negro boys and girls in the public and private schools nullify our democratic professions — 600,000 Negroes in a time of man-power shortage are denied the right to employ their skills because of the Nazi theories of racialism in America.

Thomas: — Speaking of discrimination in war industry, Mr. Randolph, you were, I know, a leader in the March on Washington movement which played so large a part in winning the Presidential order against discrimin-

ation against Negroes in defense industries. I understand that that movement continues. Would you say a word about its plans?

Randolph: — I am glad to say a word about the March on Washington Movement which came into existence in protest against the run-around Negroes were getting when they applied for jobs in defense industries and various government departments. As a result of its mobilization of Negro masses and a threatened march on Washington, July 1st, 1941, Executive Order 8802 was granted under which the President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice was established. This Committee has done splendid work in breaking down barriers against Negro workers in war plants and government departments. Unfortunately, the Committee was almost destroyed when FEPC was put in the War Manpower Commission and the railroad hearings were postponed by Mr. Paul V. McNutt. Only recently a new chairman, Father Haas, was appointed by the President. Negroes are now demanding that the railroad hearings be re-scheduled immediately and that FEPC be independent, responsible only to the President with an adequate budget and personnel, and that it adhere to the principle of public hearings, and also that the present members of the committee be retained.

The March on Washington Movement plans to hold a national conference in Chicago June 30 to July 4 to map a program of attack upon Jim-Crow.

Thomas: — Of course, Mr. Randolph, I am interested in this movement as I have long been interested in the NAACP and other movements of colored Americans. But I am even more interested in your own great role in labor. You are the president of a strong union, the Brotherhood

of Sleeping Car Employees, A. F. of L. What is your advice to the Labor movement about the Negro and to the Negro about the labor movement?

Randolph: — My advice to the American labor movement, Mr. Thomas, is that it wipe out racial discrimination and segregation, for a labor movement divided upon a basis of race, religion or national origin will become easy prey to the rising forces of Fascism and reaction in America. I also urge the Negro workers to join trade unions, both A. F. of L. and C. I. O., according to the one which controls the industries in which Negroes are employed.

Thomas: — That seems to me sound advice. I don't want to see Negroes made the tool of reactionary forces in America and you have done more than almost any other man to prevent that. But at the same time, I understand from what you are saying that there are still some unions (and we know that's a fact) which discriminate in constitution, in customs, in action, against Negroes, and on no other grounds than that they are Negroes. You, as a labor leader, and for the sake of white labor as well as for the sake of colored labor — are fighting against that. Am I right?

Randolph: — You are quite right, Mr. Thomas.

Thomas: — And that leads me to ask you for a last sort of summary remark. I'd like to know what you think about the present situation here in America, in its bearing upon the war and on the peace. What does it mean to peoples in Africa and Asia to learn some of the facts about our treatment of colored Americans?

Randolph: — The question of color and race, Mr. Thomas, in my opinion has become the central historical

issue of these times, the reason being that the peoples of color, constituting two-thirds of the population of the world, have reached a higher measure of intellectual, moral and spiritual maturity than obtained in the last war and unless the darker races are brought within the orbit of the democratic tradition and both the imperialism of the Anglo-American Empire Systems and the totalitarian states are wiped out, this will not be the last war, and democracy and the peace will be insecure.

There are some definite things our friends can do.

1. *Support the Fair Employment Practices Committee and demand strengthening and enforcement of Executive Order 8802, setting up the committee.*

2. *Demand that no filibuster in the Senate defeat the Anti-Poll Tax bill.*

3. *Demand a mixed army and an end to discrimination and segregation in the armed services.*

4. *Demand an end to a segregated school system which impoverishes Negro education. Insist upon equality in education, elimination of racial barriers against admission to schools and colleges, an end to overcrowding and poor conditions which local governments permit in schools in Negro neighborhoods.*

5. *Demand passage of a strong anti-lynching bill.*

6. *Demand low-cost public housing for Negroes and whites, conforming to healthful standards of living.*

7. *Demand provision of extensive facilities for the training of Negroes in skilled jobs.*

8. *Demand the abandonment of racial discrimination by such unions as have not yet followed the example of more progressive unions, where workers unite without regard to color, race or creed.*

9. *Demand abolition of racial segregation of human blood by the Red Cross.*

10. *Demand abandonment of the Nazi theory of white supremacy, and support cooperation of Negroes and whites for the conquered peoples in Europe, Asia and Africa in their struggle for liberation from imperialist control.*

Thomas: — Thank you very much, Philip Randolph, for telling us the facts, especially for closing with a positive program. I believe there is a great source of good will in America which can be more largely tapped. I believe that there are hundreds of thousands of people who have listened to us who are willing to go out to fight in the communities where they live, to write to their congressmen to use their influence to end the discriminations, which hurt in industry, in the armed forces, in education, and to remove things like the poll tax law, which discriminate not only against the Negroes but the poor whites in the South.

You're helping in the fight as a labor leader, and as a leader of your people, Mr. Randolph. We thank you, and I for one would like to pledge my support and I hope the support of thousands upon thousands of white Americans to a cause which is not just a cause of the Negro, but the cause of fraternity, the cause of justice, the one hope you and I have that a peace will come, which will not compel the little children who play here at our feet today to go out into a worse war than our sons now know. Thank you again.

* * * * *

NOTE: — *Emphatic proof of the charges made was given by the tremendous increase in race riots and lynchings in June, 1943. To quote just a few examples:*

Camp Stewart, Georgia — Riot between colored soldiers and white military police, which occurred after Negro soldiers were reportedly subjected to discriminatory treatment by white officers as well as by civilians in towns near the camp, to constant abuse and heckling by Southern white draftees, and to lack of recreational facilities for Negro soldiers. The inciting incident is reported to be the rumor that Negro girls were molested by white soldiers.

Camp Collins, Miss. — Fifteen Negro soldiers jailed and two shot in a clash with a white highway patrolman who attempted to stop a bus full of Negro soldiers after a baseball game at Camp Shelby. Armed white civilians joined in the fray.

Camp Van Dorn, Miss. — One Negro soldier killed, others run out of town by armed white civilians.

Harding Field, La. — Riot in New Orleans between white and colored civilians, with Negro soldiers restrained to camp for three days to prevent any leaving to assist Negro civilians.

Elgin, Florida — Shooting between Negro and white soldiers because white WAAC alleged she was attacked by Negro soldier. No proof found, but white soldiers started firing into Negro barracks.

The civilian front is no less dreadful. June saw the "zoot suit" riot in Los Angeles, claiming many Mexican and Negro victims, juvenile street fights in Newark with a number of stabbings and stonings, and the lynching of a Negro prisoner in Marianna, Florida to prevent his case from being retried as the State had ordered.

On the industrial front we have had riots and Klan-

inspired strikes in Mobile, Alabama; in Beaumont, Texas; and at Packard in Detroit.

Now we have had the appalling race riot in Detroit in which 29 people were killed and more than 700 wounded. As this is written, martial law has been declared, but as usual, the Negroes who have been the greatest victims of the riots, are also the scapegoats. Of the 29 killed, 26 were Negroes. Of the 1,300 arrested, police estimated that 85 percent were Negroes. Of the 34 convicted for disturbing the peace, all were Negroes.

The Socialist Party has called for an immediate investigation by a committee of public leaders which will probe both the immediate and long-term causes of the race riots and will propose remedies for them. The committee we have asked President Roosevelt to name consists of such men as: Father Francis Haas, F. E. P. C. chairman; William Green, A. F. of L. president; Philip Murray, C. I. O. president; A. Philip Randolph; Norman Thomas; Judge William Hastie; Walter White, head of the N. A. A. C. P.; Frank Graham, noted Southern educator; Willard Townsend, president of the United Transport Service Employees, C. I. O.; George Weaver, secretary of the C. I. O. Committee Against Race Discrimination; and Pearl Buck.

HOW CAN WE SOLVE THE RACE PROBLEM?

"Victory" is the slogan around which a majority of the people of the world have been massed into service and sacrifice and suffering. It is held up to us as meaning the defeat of fascism and oppression, and the triumph of freedom and abundance with the United States leading a crusade for the Four Freedoms.

But the army of this fight for victory is a Jim-Crow army. The land of the Four Freedoms is the home of the poll-tax. And the assault against fascism and its bestial racial horrors is in the hands of the white masters of the globe.

Their victory is not the victory desired by the people of the world. Instead, it will mean defeat of all their democratic aspirations and the hopes for freedom of the darker races, who are on the march throughout the world.

The victory which democratic Americans strive for is that which brings emancipation of all peoples, and the establishment of peace, plenty and freedom for them. Such an America will have no room for "second-class" citizens. The 13 million Negroes whose ancestors have fought in every war since the United States was founded, who have given of their sweat and blood to build this land, must also share in its rewards.

A year before the Pilgrim fathers landed on Plymouth Rock, the first black slaves had been brought to Virginia. To meet the demands of a new nation for cheap labor, the Negro was torn from his home in Africa and brought to the new continent in large numbers.

At the same time that white masters enacted laws to make Negro slavery legal and right, they also passed laws to provide slavery for white workers. Whites were brought by thousands to America as contract slaves. Sometimes they sold themselves to shipmasters for 7 to 14 years service in order to pay for their passage. Other thousands were political offenders sold for long terms of service to American planters. Some were actually kidnapped in British ports and brought to America, to be sold for long terms of service. White workers in the early years of

America were often sold for terms of service for minor breaches of the law.

The servitude under which the Negro was compelled to labor was called chattel slavery and was generally for life. The servitude under which the white worker was compelled to labor was called indentured service and was generally for a long but definitely limited term of years. Otherwise the conditions of their slavery were usually the same.

NOT RACE BUT LABOR PROBLEM

Thus the origin of "the Negro question" in the United States was not a color question or a matter of racial prejudice. It was a labor problem. The exploiters of a new continent needed cheap labor. If the Negro furnished that cheap labor, well and good. If not, white workers were the victims of their greed and exploitation. In either case, a master class lived off the product of the toil of others, and built a new world which took wealth from nature for private profit, not for social good.

The slaves were freed during and after the Civil War, when slavery was becoming economically unprofitable. But when they were freed they were given not so much as a square inch of land to live on. Since emancipation the life of the Negro has been an unbroken round of struggle against prejudice, discrimination and segregation, often punctuated by the vivid horrors of lynching and the acrid smell of the charred bodies and bleached bones of the victims of lynch mobs.

During the slave period, conditions of free labor in America had not been good, but there had been consistently a chance to move west, to change one's social

class, to better one's economic conditions. But the same period that brought freedom to the black slave brought a new slavery to all American workers, particularly the constant stream of immigrants who were the new "cheap labor," despised, (like the Negro) for their nationality and ignorance, exploited like him for the profits of the ruling class.

Under the old system a slave was sold for life. Under the new, the free worker sold himself by the hour or day or week or month for wages. Wage workers are legally free. But what their freedom amounts to is the right to leave one boss one day and go to hunt for another boss the next day. And this is so whether the "free" worker is white or colored.

Why then did free workers accept the new slavery of the wage and profit system? One major reason is the ability of the owning class to keep workers divided so that they do not realize that their common interest lies in displacing the profit-makers and cooperatively organizing the means of production by which they live. The prejudice of race against race is among the strongest of barriers between workers.

NEGROES MOST EXPLOITED

Certainly, the white worker is exploited by capitalism. He has no job security against unemployment; he is conscripted to fight capitalism's recurring wars. But by contrast with the black worker, he is a superior class.

In most states, the Negro child starts off with the handicap of lack of health and education facilities available to the white child. Even vocational training goes first to the white. He is kept out of all but the lowest un-

trained positions — because he was not trained for them! And a whole social system of inferiority is built around this economic fact of a most exploited class making a less exploited class more content, and fighting to keep their gains away from the less fortunate.

This social system is the thing we see that obviously means prejudice. . . . removed one step from its economic basis. It is Jim-Crow society. Jim-Crow ghettos to live in. Back seats on buses. Inadequate schools. And separation from white people so that natural sympathy and understanding on either side are practically impossible. The unknown is often the feared. And the worst of Jim-Crow is that it has produced generations of children and then adults, both white and black, whose ignorance concerning the other becomes an anti-social phobia.

But the white worker who feels a stake in preserving the status quo of his superiority to the Negro does not know his own interest. The subsistence standard of living of any group of workers drives down the wages and the living standards of the others. The supply of cheaper labor, usually neglected but still at hand when needed, can always be brought in to break strikes or organization of white workers, or to lower their conditions to compete with the Negroes on the lower level. Time and again the industrial cities of the North have seen cheap Negro labor from the South come in. The whites lose by the division. But Negroes do not gain either. Last to be hired by industry (witness the present manpower crisis, in which discrimination persists) they are the first to be let go in depression; the most numerous on relief rolls; the hardest hit by capitalism.

Prejudice pays only the bosses; but it pays them well.

Workers have not always been blind to their common interest, and in this lies our hope for a world free of prejudice and wage-slavery alike.

In the deep South the growth of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, uniting whites and Negroes against feudal oppressions, exploded for all time the theory that trade unions cannot surmount racial barriers and benefit all the people.

Together with this growth in the South came a political consciousness expressed in the fight against the poll tax and the understanding that poll-tax government strengthens the power of reactionaries over all of us through Congress, and not only white supremacy over Negroes in the South. Legislation against lynching, defeated in every Congress, pressed this point home, and those who looked at statistics discovered that whites as well as Negroes suffered from Lynch Law.

NEGROES ORGANIZE

Now we have the beginning of a mass Negro movement to fight for the equality of the Negro people; equality in jobs and opportunity for advancement; equality in politics and government; equality in every sense. This movement, expressed through organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Urban League, and the March on Washington Movement, are now, — and ought increasingly to be a power for good. Certainly Negroes aren't organizing to pull their white brothers down to an equality of poverty and exploitation. Neither — we hope — are they organizing just to pull themselves up to the white man's present

level, or to make a Negro copy of his world with its landlords and tenants, its bosses and bossed, its riches and poverty, its unemployment and war. A man with a bad case of smallpox doesn't struggle to get as well as his neighbor with a lighter case; he struggles to get rid of smallpox.

Every single point in the immediate program of action which Philip Randolph eloquently urges on all American citizens, white and colored alike, in the radio speech which forms the first chapter of this pamphlet, is vitally important for our common liberty.

But neither freedom nor peace nor plenty can be won on the simple basis of a Negro rights movement. It will take a vigorous and intelligent human rights movement to conquer war, poverty and unemployment. That movement must have a program for the nation and for the world.

Socialist speakers when asked their program for the Negro, often used to reply: "We have none, except to treat the Negro like every other human being and to win his aid in the struggle for the emancipation for us all." In a point of fact, Socialist Party platforms have had specific planks on Negro rights and how to win them, but fundamentally, the answer we have quoted was right. We Socialists want the Negro treated as we want the white man treated. We want jobs for everybody with equal pay for equal work. We want to produce plenty for all and distribute it fairly. That can't be done while a few own and manage for their own profit the natural resources — coal, iron, oil, etc. — which all of us need for our common life, or the huge monopolistic enterprises on which so much of our modern production depends.

What, then, is the answer? A totalitarian state under

a dictator like Germany or even Russia? By no means. Such a state may perhaps provide a low order of security but at the price of a new kind of slavery. Lincoln's famous "Government of the people, by the people, and for the people" must apply to economics as well as politics. It doesn't mean "Government of the workers, by the bosses, for the profits of absentee owners." Neither does it mean "Government of the workers, by a dictator, for the military power and glory of the state."

It does mean establishing economic security, with equal opportunity for all to advance themselves, regardless of race or color. It means true political, social and economic democracy for Negro and white.

We can't have true democracy with liberty and security just by wishing for it. We need to develop basic organizations. One of the most important of these is the labor union movement. As Philip Randolph said, it is the business of every Negro to join the union, A. F. of L. or C. I. O., which has the support of the workers in his industry. C. I. O. unions generally, and most A. F. of L. unions do not draw the color line. Some A. F. of L. unions and the Railroad Brotherhoods do draw a color line, and thus betray their own basic principle. White workers as well as colored should be concerned with breaking down this discrimination which plays into the hands of the bosses.

OLD PARTIES FAIL NEGRO

Another basic organization is the political party. Brave men have died for the right to vote and it is not a right to be thrown away. Workers, white and colored alike, tend to waste their votes by splitting them between

Republicans and Democrats. The difference between them is pretty near the difference between Twiddledee and Twiddledum.

President Roosevelt himself had been somewhat progressive, and better intentioned toward the Negro than most American politicians, including his Republican predecessors. He did issue the Executive Order calling for equality of employment in war industry which, at first, some Negroes hailed as a second Emancipation Proclamation. He did appoint a Fair Employment Practices Committee to carry it out. Some progress was made, and then in the case of the few remaining colored firemen on the Southern Railroad, the President himself all but killed his own child to appease the Southern Congressmen of his own party and alas, the Railroad Brotherhoods! The President has never used his enormous power and influence to drive through anti-lynching legislation or the anti-poll tax law or effectively to end discrimination in the armed forces.

Nor is the record of the Republicans any better than that of the Democratic Party. Altho for many years they held complete control of the federal government, they made no attempt to enact an anti-lynching bill or to abolish the poll tax. Capitalizing upon the fact that Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, the Republicans have ever since maintained the fiction that their party is the Negro's friend. But at no time during their administration of the country were any material steps taken to provide greater security or higher living standards for the Negro people.

Good men in both parties have been afraid of the re-

actionaries in them, and despite fair words, they have given deference to a theory of white supremacy wholly akin to Hitler's monstrous doctrine of the master race.

SOCIALISM THE ANSWER

By contrast, the Socialist Party has a clean record of steadfast opposition to all racial discrimination and prejudice throughout the world. It is the foe of all exploitation. It has been the leader in the advocacy of every bit of progressive legislation. It welcomes white and colored workers, workers with hand and brain, to a common fellowship in the struggle to harness our marvelous machinery, not for profits for the few and exploitation for the many, but for abundance for all: not for the victories of war, but the victories of peace.

To make its program effective, to put its ideals into practice, it needs your help. Only the demand of the great mass of people, welded together in their own unions and their own political party, can compel the institution of a new way of life — with opportunity for all, with the great resources of this nation mobilized to produce the things needed for a fuller life.

The Socialist Party can be just as strong as you make it. It welcomes you in the struggle for a better world, in which victory's victim will not be either Negro or white workers but the system that exploits both!

You'll Never Get Rich

You'll never get rich by joining the Socialist Party. THAT is not the Royal Road to Riches. But don't let that keep you from joining. The odds are 1,000 to 1 that you will never be rich anyway, and what with the war and the economic breakdown that will probably follow it, the odds are growing worse.

Although you won't make a lot of money by joining the Socialist Party, there are many ways in which you WILL be richly rewarded.

You'll be richly rewarded in the knowledge that you are participating actively in the crusade for a warless world, for a world society of freedom, peace and plenty.

You'll be richly rewarded in the fellowship of a struggle for a better world together with a host of sincere and courageous comrades who are working towards the same goal.

You'll be richly rewarded in knowing that you aren't supinely and passively awaiting the judgments of history — be they good or bad — but are actively MAKING history.

You'll be richly rewarded in knowing that you are doing your part in fighting fascism and its creator — capitalism — both at home and abroad, and that you are helping to build a World Co-operative Commonwealth.

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